

THE

Presbyterians described

In the Character of their Predecessours

THE

PHARISEES.

MATTH. V. XX.

I say unto you, that except your Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.



Josephus, though himself a Pharisee, gives this Character of them, That they were a Crafty and Subtil Generation of Men, and so perverse even to Princes themselves, that they would not fear many times openly to affront and oppose them; and so far had they insinuated themselves into the affections and estimations of the Populacy, that their good or ill word was enough to make or blast any one with the people, who would implicitly believe them, let their report be never so false or malicious. Therefore King *Alexander Jannæus* very wisely advised his Queen, when he lay upon his Death-Bed, That if she would secure the Kingdom to her self, and her Successors, she should bestow some Authority upon the *Pharisees*; who would sound her praise, and obtain her the peoples Favour. He further added, that after his Death she should go to *Jerusalem*, and make the most plausible Speech she could to them; promising them that she would do nothing in the Administration of the Government, but by their advice; and that by this means she should Reign in great quiet and assurance. Certain it is, they were so infinitely Proud and Insolent, Surly and Ill-natur'd, that they hated all Mankind but themselves, and censured whosoever would not be of their way, as a Villain and a Reprobate: Greatly Zealous to gather *Profelytes* to their party; not to make them more Religious, but more Fierce and Cruel, more Carping and Censorious, more Heady and High-minded; in short, *Twofold more the Children of the Devil than they were before*. All Religion and kindness was confin'd within the bounds of their own Party, and the first Principles wherewith they Inspir'd their new Converts were, That none but they were the *godly party*, and that all other persons were Slaves, and Sons of the Earth: and therefore especially endeavour'd to Inspire them with a mighty Zeal and Fierceness against all that differ'd from them; so that if any one did but speak a good word of our Saviour or his Apostles Institutions, he should be presently Excommunicated and cast out, persecuted, and devoted to the Death. To this end, they were

wont not onely to *Separate*, but *Discriminate* themselves from the herd and community, by some peculiar notes and badges of Distinction; but they were especially active and diligent in *what cost them little*, the outward instances of Religion, such Duties especially as did more immediately refer to God Almighty, as frequent Fasting and Praying; which they did very often, and very long, with *Demure* and *Mortified looks*, in a *whining* and an *affected Tone*: and they so contrived the Scheme of their Religion, that what they did might be *seen of men* to the best advantage. Yet under all this *seeming Sanctity*, they were but Religious Villains, *Spiteful*, *Malitious*, *Gripping*, *Covetous*, great Oppressors, *Merciless*, *Dealers*, *Heady*, *Seditious*, *Rebellious*, and indeed guilty of most kinds of Immorality; all which they thought to palliate and varnish over with their *more than ordinary pretence* of Religion.

Another Branch of this Sect there was, called the *Zealots*; These men were mighty Assertors of the Law, and the *Strictness* and *Purity* of Religion, assuming a Liberty to themselves to question Notorious Offenders, without staying for the ordinary Formalities of the Law; nay, when they thought good, executed Capital vengeance on them. And being not timely Impeded, their Zeal degenerated into all manner of Licentiousness and wild Extravagance; and they not onely became the pests of the Commonwealth at home, but opened the Door for the *Romans* to break in upon them, to their final and irrecoverable Ruine; and they were continually prompting the people to throw off the *Roman Yoke*, and Vindicate themselves in their *native liberty*; and when they had turn'd all things into hurry and confusion, themselves in the mean time silt in these troubled waters. *Josephus* gives a large account of them, and every where bewails them as the great Plague of the Nation: He tells us of them, That they scrupled not to rob any; to kill many of the prime Nobility, under pretence of *holding Correspondence* with the *Romans*, and *betraying the liberty* of their Country; openly glorying that herein they were the *benefactors* and *saviours* of the People. They abrogated the *Succession* of antient Families, thrusting obscure and ignoble persons into high Offices, that so they might oblige the most infamous Villains to their party. And as if not content to injure men, they affronted Heaven, and proclaimed defiance to the Divinity it self, by breaking into and prophaning the most holy Place; stiling themselves *Zealots* (says he) as if their undertakings were good and honourable, while they were greedy and emulous of the greatest Wickednesses, and outdid the worst of men. Many attempts were made by *Annas* the High-Priest, to reduce them to order and sobriety: But neither force of Arms nor fair and gentle methods could do any good upon them; they held out, and went on in their Violent proceedings, and joyning with the *Idumeans*, committed all manner of outrage, slaying the *High-Priest* himself. Nay, when *Jerusalem* was straitly Besieged by the *Romans*, and their danger equal with the rest, yet they ceased not to create *Tumults* and *Factions* within, and were indeed the main cause of the *Jews* destruction.

F I N I S.

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